THE CAMBRIDGE STATISTICS DISCUSSION GROUP

Wednesday 26th November 2025 7:15 for 7:45

City House,
Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 1RY

100 years of educational trials – no significant difference?

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Abstract: Randomised controlled trials (RCTs) in education research have been carried out for over 100 years. Over the last 15 of these years their use has increased significantly. In this talk we examine the field of education research to address the key challenges faced by education trials today and possible solutions. Despite their growing use they have been subject to sustained and rather trenchant criticism from significant sections of the education research community. There are key areas in which RCTs require focus and improvement: in particular in recruitment and retention, implementation and outcome measures.

Speaker: Riikka Hofmann is a University Lecturer in the Faculty of Education where she leads the Research Strand Dialogue, Professional Change and Leadership in the Faculty s Cambridge Educational Dialogue Research Group (CEDiR). Her research focuses on leadership and professional change in educational and medical settings, studied from the perspective of sociocultural psychology. She also conducts research on classroom learning and dialogue, having been involved in research in the U.K., Finland and Mexico, as well as in Sub-Saharan Africa, India and Pakistan in the Faculty's REAL Centre. Her research utilises a mixed methods approach, drawing both on qualitative approaches, process analyses and evaluation designs. Riikka teaches on the Educational Leadership and School improvement Masters route as well as on a range of Masters research methods courses in the Faculty. She is the coordinator of the Research Methods strand of the Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Assessment and Examinations, ran jointly with Cambridge Assessment. She also collaborates with the Postgraduate Medical Education Centre at Cambridge University Hospitals at Addenbrooke's, the Cambridge University Health Partners (CUHP) and Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. Riikka is an expert member of a Cabinet-Office led Cross-Whitehall trials advisory panel, she advises various Government departments on research methods in policy evaluations as well as advising on leadership development in the civil service Future Leaders Scheme.

Directions: (From Central Cambridge) City House is a ten minute walk from Cambridge Central train station. From the train station go straight down to the end of Station Road, cross the road and turn left going straight ahead passing the entrance to Brooklands Avenue on your right. After further couple of minutes walk City House is located on your right. A map is located in the pdf file at https://imaging.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/statswiki/csdg/newtalks. The nearest parking is at the train station. It is also possible to park at Cambridge North station. The front doors will be locked at 7:45. Arrivals after 7:45pm can gain admittance by contacting the secretary on 07761769436.

Provisional Next Meetings:
3rd February 2026 – Nick Galwey (formerly GlaxoSmithKline) on 'Connecting the False Discovery Rate to shrunk estimates'.
March – Mihaela van der Schaar (Cambridge Centre for AI in Medicine) on 'Revolutionising healthcare: AI-driven breakthroughs in medicine and healthcare delivery'.
April – Daniela De Angelis (Biostatistics) on 'Real-time nowcasting and forecasting of COVID-19 dynamics in England'.

Supper: Some members eat regularly in Wetherspoons (St Andrew's Street) before each meeting at **5-45pm**. Feel free to join them.
Subscriptions: of 1 pound are now due for attending the 2025-2026 session.
Secretary: Peter Watson, MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, 15 Chaucer Road, Cambridge CB2 7EF; telephone 01223 769479; E-mail peter.watson@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk.

Slides and .mp3 files of old talks: http://www.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/people/peter.watson/csdg.html
Permanent archive at https://archive.org/details/@peter_c_watson